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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 12 December 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that Israel is escalating its military assaults and human rights violations against the Palestinian people. In the past several days, air strikes and excessive force by the occupying Power have caused death and injury to more Palestinian civilians, including children. Along with the incessant escalation of Israel's colonization campaign and the terror wrought by Israeli settlers throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, these crimes are further traumatizing the Palestinian population and causing the rapid rise of tensions and instability on the ground.

On Friday, 9 December 2011, such brute force caused 14 casualties in one family, whose home was hit by a missile launched by Israeli warplanes into a civilian area in north-west Gaza City. This military attack caused the collapse of the Za'alan family home, killing the father, 38-year-old Bahjat Za'alan, and his 10-year-old son, Ramadan Za'alan, and injuring 12 other members of the family, many severely, including 6 other innocent children. Indeed, the wounds sustained by 10-year-old Ramadan Za'alan, which led to his death later that day, reflect the lethal impact of Israeli weaponry used against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population.

On the same day, the Israeli occupying forces killed yet another Palestinian civilian in the West Bank. Every Friday, Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, gather alongside Israeli and international peace activists to protest Israel's illegal construction of the annexation Wall on confiscated Palestinian land, and these peaceful protesters are typically subjected to excessive force by the occupying army, resulting in numerous casualties, including the death and maiming of several people. On Friday, 9 December, in the village of Nabi Saleh, north of Ramallah, occupying forces fired tear gas canisters at protesters at close range, striking Mustafa Tamimi, age 28, in the head. The other protesters witnessed the impact of the metal canister blowing off

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half of Tamimi's face while Israeli soldiers looking on just laughed, reflecting the callousness of the occupying forces and their absolute disregard for and belittling of human life when it comes to the Palestinian people.

Tragically, Tamimi died of wounds on Saturday, 10 December, coinciding with the day that the international community pays tribute to human rights defenders worldwide in commemoration of the sixty-third anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Tamimi is the twentieth person to be killed by Israel in such peaceful demonstrations since 2002. Further adding to this tragedy, mourners at his funeral were also struck with tear gas canisters by the occupying forces, and six were arrested, including four Israelis and two international activists.

In yet another incident indicative of Israel's daily brutality, a 37-year-old Palestinian taxi driver, Haitham Ibrahim Kabha, was stopped on Saturday, 10 December, at a checkpoint on a road to Jenin and was forcibly removed from his vehicle and beaten by the occupying forces, who caused a fracture in his back and severe head and neck injuries. According to one witness, soldiers beat Kabha repeatedly until he was rendered unconscious. An Israeli ambulance near the checkpoint did not stop to provide him with aid, while at the same time, the soldiers prevented a Palestinian ambulance from reaching him for at least half an hour, until they were pressured to allow access to it by protests at the checkpoint.

Excessive force was also on flagrant display by the occupying Power against Palestinian youth from the Shufaat refugee camp in Occupied East Jerusalem on Sunday, 11 December. Shufaat residents were protesting the construction of a new Israeli military checkpoint at the entrance of the camp, which is now completely surrounded by the Wall and which will leave the camp totally isolated from the rest of the City. Young people protesting against the Wall and the checkpoint, which will control all movement into and out of the camp, were responded to by the occupying forces with water cannons and other brutal measures. Also, earlier in the week, at least 300 Israeli soldiers in armoured vehicles and accompanied by bulldozers stormed the villages of Deir Ghassana and Beit Rima near Ramallah on 8 December, raiding homes and mosques.

At the same time, extremist Israeli settlers continue their terror campaign throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Overnight yesterday, hundreds of armed settlers from the illegal "Yitzhar" settlement raided the village of Asira al-Qibliya near Nablus, throwing rocks at Palestinian homes and smashing windows of homes and vehicles and attempting to burn other property, causing widespread fear among the villagers.

All of these illegal, violent and provocative actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and its illegal settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are further demonstration of the brutality meted out daily by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people and the massive human rights violations it is committing against a civilian population that is entitled to protection under international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory in its entirety. The international community, including the Security Council, cannot remain silent or continue to only express regret or disappointment over Israel's violations. It is the responsibility of the international community to put an end to these crimes by the occupying Power, and this responsibility begins with holding Israel accountable under international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Regrettably, the failure to hold Israel accountable is only further emboldening its impunity, as it continues to arrogantly and recklessly pursue its illegal policies, including its expansionist settlement campaign, which continues apace, especially in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, despite the clear legal prohibitions and resolutions and the global calls for a complete cessation of this unlawful campaign. Here, I am compelled to inform you that today it has been revealed that the Israeli Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, has approved the construction of another 40 new settlement units and a farm in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The plans for this illegal construction would be near the illegal settlement of "Efrat" and would result in the further expansion of the so-called "Etzion" settlement bloc, bringing it to the edges of Bethlehem and effectively cutting off the City, which is also surrounded by the Wall, from the rest of the southern West Bank.

Such incendiary and illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, are totally contradictory to the goal of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and thus to the ongoing effort of the Quartet to revive the peace process for the achievement of this objective. We reiterate that Israel's illegal settlement activities, especially in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, are tearing apart the fabric of Palestinian society as they are destroying the contiguity, integrity and cohesion of the Palestinian Territory and the actual viability of the two-State solution. It is incumbent on the international community, particularly the Security Council, considering its duty under the Charter of the United Nations vis-à-vis international peace and security, to act forthwith to redress this grave matter that is making the realization of a peaceful, just and viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more elusive with each passing day.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 413 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 8 December 2011 (A/ES-10/541-S/2011/765), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations